



Wichita Animal Control Advisory Board

Minutes

Date- May 4, 2016

Attendees- Teresa Burks, Chris Hagman, Stephanie Fisk McCurdy

Absent- John Stevens, Traci Gehrke, Judy Handley Sarah Guengerich, Danelle Brewer (KHS)

City Staff- Captain Nolte ,Lt. Kenney, Dennis Graves, Drew Bessey, Robin Bradley, Jan Jarman, Brandon Hall

Actions

Call to order at: 4:05 pm by chairperson, Stephanie Fisk McCurdy

Due to lack of a quorum, the minutes from April 6 could not be approved. This will be tabled until the June 1 meeting.

Spay and Neuter proclamation

This will take place on May 10 during the regular City council meeting. Stephanie Fisk McCurdy and Chris Hagman will attend on behalf of the board. All citizens are welcome to attend the council meeting.

Board Discussion

City staff shared the following information on dog licenses:

- 36,635 dogs licenses issued in 2015
- 31,283 of those licenses were for spayed or neutered dogs (85.4%)
- Based on census data of households and AVMA formula of 36.5% of households owning a dog, approximately 18,779 dogs were not licensed in the City of Wichita
- A dog license can be helpful in locating owner if dog becomes loose

The board then continued the discussion from last month on asking city council to consider an increase in the dog license fee and establishing a fund to be used for spay and neuter vouchers.

Teresa Birks would like to see an option for citizens to voluntarily contribute to a fund for spay and neuter vouchers. This could be similar to the “chickadee checkoff “option on the state income tax form. She also expressed concern for the impact of a fee increase on fixed income households.

Stephanie Fisk McCurdy inquired about offering a sliding fee structure in order to assist lower income dog owners; Teresa Birks offered that research doesn't indicate that this leads to an increase in those who will purchase a dog license.

The question was asked if Animal Control currently has a donation fund set up for community members to designate funds for that division. Dennis Graves stated that yes, there is a fund for this and it currently contains a few hundred dollars; the specific amount was unknown. Those who contribute to this fund may request specific programs for the disbursement of the contribution. Dennis restated that dog license fees go into the general fund currently and are not specially designated to fund animal control programs.

Captain Nolte suggested that a committee of interested board members and community members might pursue additional research on creating a spay and neuter fund, using funds from a license fee increase for vouchers. Stephanie Fisk McCurdy will gather the names of those interested.

The next topic for board discussion was animal abuse and neglect. Dennis Graves stated that the current process is: citizen makes a report of abuse or neglect; sometimes this is anonymous. An Animal Control Officer (ACO) investigates and if it meets the definition outlined in Chapter 6 of the city code, the case will be presented to the City Prosecutor. Often, charges cannot be filed due to lack of evidence to verify the claim or because the level of neglect doesn't meet the legal criteria. Dennis Graves stated that many citizens do not understand the limits of the law and ACOs can only enforce what is legally allowed. Dennis told the board that approximately 2500 neglect and abuse cases were reported annually with about 1% being extreme cases (malicious abuse cases)

Jan Jarman, City of Wichita Law Department asked about leaving dogs in cars, and does that constitute neglect? Dennis Graves stated that ACOs use a temperature scale to determine when outside conditions create an unsafe environment to a dog left inside a vehicle.

Chris Hagman- Does Animal control have the resources to enforce the current laws on neglect and abuse and would they have the resources to increase that enforcement? Per Lt. Kenney and Drew Bessey, no they do not have enough resources. Currently, the division averages 65 calls per day and the calls are prioritized based on level of threat- danger. With current staffing level, not all calls are responded to each day & there is usually carryover to the next business day.

Captain Nolte- Enforcing laws on neglect is challenging due to lack of resources. Could WPD patrol officers assist with this?

If the board goes forward with recommending a change to Chapter 6 section on abuse and neglect, Jan Jarman suggests that they consider adding "dogs in back of pickups" as endangerment include that within the definition of neglect.

Captain Nolte suggested that the board review the current ordinance and ensure that the language is clear on what is enforceable vs. what is not enforceable. As with any change, public education would be necessary. No action on this was taken and the board will re-visit at the next meeting on June 1.

Public Comments

Sara Coffman of Wichita Animal Action League shared the results of their recent survey to gauge citizen reaction to a possible increase in dog license fees. The survey results are included in the minutes and the board will consider their input in their decision making.

Ellen Querner, PALs Rescue stated that she agrees with adding a clause to the neglect ordinance, prohibiting the transportation of unrestrained –unkenned dogs, in the bed of a pickup truck. She doesn't feel that this is a safe practice. Ellen would like to board & Animal Control to consider allowing violations to be documented

by cell phone photos, taken by concerned citizens. Jan Jarman mentioned that even with a photo and tag number of the vehicle, it might be difficult to prove who was driving the vehicle.

George Theoharis read a statement on the dangers of loose dogs and the risk it creates for mail carriers in the community. He also stated that too many landlords have loose restrictions on dogs allowed by renters and too many renters do not sufficiently control their dogs, putting neighborhoods at risk. He would like to see the board take action which prevents this.

Board Actions

No action could be voted on due to lack of quorum.

Actions for Next meeting

Board members should review chapter 6, section on abuse and neglect and be prepared to discuss the changes they feel are needed. Members of the public are invited to review the ordinance and provide their input at the next meeting.

Board members should consider if lengthening the meeting beyond 75 minutes would be productive.

Meeting adjourned at 5:14pm

Next meeting is June 1, 2016, 4pm-5:15pm

777 E Waterman (Wichita Transit Center Administration Building)